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STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

# ARMY NATIONAL GUARD DIVISIONS: A HEDGE AGAINST UNCERTAINTY

BY

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## ARMY NATIONAL GUARD DIVISIONS: A HEDGE AGAINST UNCERTAINTY

by

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The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or any of its agencies.

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#### ABSTRACT

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In the current post-cold war era, the leadership of the United States is faced with an usual peacetime dilemma. Domestic concerns and the end of the Cold War have caused many policy makers to turn away from National Security issues. A major unresolved issue in the ongoing debate about the appropriate size of the Armed Forces is whether the nation should continue to maintain a reserve over and above those specifically identified in current operations plans. Since its founding, the United States has relied on a small standing Army, backed up by a large, organized militia for its defense and national security. Over the course of the past two hundred and twenty years, there have been many attempts by the Army's active component to challenge the readiness, training and combat capability of today's National Guard. Too often this attempt has ignored the ability of the U.S. Army to execute its' portion of the National Security Strategy (NSS).

The conclusion is to avoid an unacceptable level of risk to

the strategic defense of the United States by balancing the simultaneity of threats as outlined in the NSS.

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#### ARMY NATIONAL GUARD DIVISIONS: A HEDGE AGAINST UNCERTAINTY

#### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to postulate the ability to expand the Army either by mobilizing additional trained combat units or by providing cadres to create new ones - is an enduring requirement. This capability must be retained, regardless of any then-current deliberate warplans for the employment of specific active or reserve forces. The ability to form additional units - beyond the existing active forces- depends upon the infusion of trained individuals into organizations to expand the number of Army combat units. This expansion is logically accomplished through the use of trained and experienced personnel from National Guard, Army Reserve and Active forces.

The role of citizen-soldiers in the nation's psyche was more clearly understood (and accepted) in times past. Guardsmen represented an intrinsic defensive ability comprised of that portion of the populace who were willing, for whatever reason, to join local units and undergo military training in peacetime. They were an integral part of what would today be called a capabilities based national defense strategy. For example, the actual threats to U.S. interests and the perceived severity or immediacy of those threats had little to do with the size of the

reserve components in the period between the two world wars. In other words, the size of the National Guard prior to the Cold War was largely due to the willingness of citizens to serve and the willingness of the nation to provide a robust reserve force structure.

Similarly, the resourcing of reserve component units was based on the recognition that the nation was unwilling to field a large standing army. Thus, there was a need to maintain the ability of the nation to mobilize for war, an enduring need that appeared to transcend current contingency plans.

In 1933, few defense planners outside the United States Navy were focused on a specific threat. Considering the domestic concerns of the time and the lack of a direct threat to the continental United States, it was suggested that the divisions in the National Guard were not needed. Congress, however rejected this proposal and noted that: "To abolish any of them at this time simply means that they would have to be recreated on mobilization with untrained officers and men...." A few years later, Congress' judgment was emphatically vindicated as these 18 divisions, along with six active ones, became the foundation upon which the nation built the 89 divisions that were eventually committed to a two-theater war that became known as the Second World War.

The essential point is that these divisions, created after World War I, were not created in response to a known or emerging threat, but were maintained through a time when there was no immediate threat to the United States and were thus available when the threat picture changed. The approach employed by Congress during that period is similar to what Senator McCain recently characterized as remaining "prepared to prepare" to deal with less predictable longer-term threats. By retaining these combat divisions, the nation had at its service one of the essential elements of a strategic reserve: Units that could either deploy, if required, or through providing cadres of trained leaders, build additional units.

#### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The National Guard is a centuries-old institution that has been defending this land since the 1620's when the first organized militia was formed in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The National Guard has contributed significant forces to every major conflict since the birth of the nation (see table 1).

THE NATIONAL GUARD IN AMERICAN WARS

WAR OR CONFLICT	PERSONNEL ACTIVATED				
Revolutionary War	164,087				
War of 1812	489,173				
Mexican War	73,260				
Civil War	1,933,779				
Spanish-American War	164,932				
Mexican Border Service	158,664				
World War I	379,071				
World War II	300,034				
Korean War	138,600				
Vietnam War	12,234				
Southwest Asia/Gulf War	62,411				

Prior to World War II, the size of the National Guard exceeded the size of the regular Army; and in the event of national emergencies, it was generally recognized and designed for national defense. During the 19th century, the active forces fluctuated between 25,000 officers and to a high of 78,000 for enlisted during the latter part of the century. Prior to World War II, the size of the active forces was 275,000 officers and enlisted personnel.

In contrast, when the Korean War broke out in June 1950, the U.S. Army, though large in size, found itself unprepared to fight a major war. The Army had not modernized its weapon systems and had not maintained a high level of readiness in its combat units. The Truman Administration found it necessary to mobilize the Army National Guard and call into federal service eight Guard divisions.

Of the eight Army National Guard divisions mobilized for the Korean War, only two divisions, the 40th and 45th Infantry Divisions, were deployed to the combat zone in Korea; two divisions were deployed to Europe to bolster the U.S. Army forces there against the possibility of a Soviet attack, while major U.S. armed forces were conducting combat operations in Korea. The remaining four divisions were kept in the continental United States to serve as a strategic reserve. Many smaller units, however served in Korea as did individuals who replaced casualties.

In contrast, at the height of the Vietnam War the Army had over 500,000 troops in the war zone; the Army Guard contributed less than 3% of the force. If Following the Vietnam War, General Creighton W. Abrams, the Chief of Staff, Army, decided that the United States Army should never again go to war without augmentation by the National Guard and the Army Reserve. The

Army, under General Abrams initiated what became known as the "Abrams Doctrine". The intent of this doctrine was to fully integrate the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve into active Army operations, training and force structure. 12

The most significant result of mobilizing the National Guard is that it becomes a significant and newsworthy event in over 2,700 communities across the United States. When the reserves are mobilized, businesses across the United States are affected. In small communities, many of their workers may be reservists, thereby causing a loss of experienced workers and the concurrent lessening of available replacements. There may be a loss in income when a significant number of reservists are mobilized and moved overseas. Above all, one must never lose sight of the clear and forceful message that mobilizing the National Guard sends to a potential enemy, "..when you mobilize the reserve component, you mobilize the nation" 13.

In 1973, then Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, drawing on the Abrams Doctrine, adopted the Total Force Policy for all services in the Department of Defense; this policy requires all of the regular and reserve forces of the Army be treated as a single integrated national defense force. The policy's basic underlying tenet is that the Army National Guard is the primary combat reserve and augmentation for the active Army during major military contingencies, operations other than

war and major theater wars. 14 The Total Force Policy accepted the premise that the nation could not mount or sustain a significant military operation or theater war without using the Army National Guard. In order to increase the readiness and training of its officers and enlisted soldiers, the Army National Guard embarked on an ambitious program which involved many innovative ideas and concepts, resulting in increased training opportunities and increased individual and unit readiness.

Active component commanders at brigade-level and higher singled out the Army National Guard units for their exceptional ability in being able to rapidly mobilize, marshal personnel and equipment, deploy overseas to an unfamiliar and austere environment, and quickly assume mission responsibility upon arrival in-theater. The Army National Guard commanders attributed their unit's success to three programs: overseas deployment training, the key personnel upgrade program and the CAPSTONE alignment program. All three programs enhanced individual and unit tactical and technical expertise. These programs also provided invaluable experience in mobilizing a unit, certifying unit personnel for deployment, marshaling personnel and equipment, conducting port operations and deploying overseas to an unfamiliar area of operations.

Since the end of the Gulf War, the Army leadership has consistently attempted to drastically reduce the combat arms units of the Army National Guard and the overall end strength of the Guard. Since 1991, the end strength of the Army National Guard has dropped from 445,000 officers and enlisted to the current 362,000. Additionally, as a result of the off-site agreement following the release of the Quadrennial Defense Review report by the Department of Defense, the Army National Guard has agreed to a further reduction of 17,000 spaces.

Originally, the Army wanted the Army Guard to drop by 38,000 spaces. The Army has also postured strongly for the elimination of the eight Army National Guard Divisions and converting Army Guard combat elements into combat service and combat service support units.

History shows that the existence of the National Guard is requisite to providing the nation a hedge against uncertainty. Throughout our nation's conflicts, the National Guard has been the key to attaining victory and providing a strategic deterrent to stave off defeat in order to mobilize the will of the nation.

#### THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

The ability of the United States to exert global leadership and engagement in the world is vital to the safety and security of this nation and all free nations of the world. The United States is the sole world super power and its military plays a key role shaping the international environment in ways that protect and promote our national interests and values. 19

An understanding of the global environment is key to developing a peacetime engagement policy. An aim of our NSS is to promote a prosperous and secure community of responsible nations. Any effort towards this aim is dependent upon the stage of progress of the world actors (nations).

These actors fall into the categories of core, transition, rogue and failing states. Core states are successful democracies that share the burdens of security with the U.S.

They have less than one-fifth of world's population, but four-fifths of the economic capacity. Transition states will determine how much the core will grow and whether the future is more or less secure. The priority transition states are Russia, China, India, Algeria and Turkey. These states account for most of the world's population. The priority failing states are Bosnia, Sudan, Angola, Somalia, Rwanda and Afghanistan due to their large-scale humanitarian crises. Rogue states and their nonstate partners are the major threat to international

security. They are eager to acquire Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and other dangerous technologies. The priority rogue states are Syria, Libya, Iraq, Iran and North Korea because of their demonstrated and current potential to catastrophically destabilize international economic efforts and the security environment. They can have direct and indirect influence on the increase of core states. Failing states are economically bankrupt and pose a huge humanitarian burden on the international community. They are few, but have the potential to increase the number of rogues or cause other actors to become failed states. Each category of actors must be examine for its short and long-term effects on international security to determine which states should have the priority of effort for peacetime engagement and security.

The global environment is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, marked by many threats and opportunities that directly and indirectly affect U.S. national interests. The likelihood of the U.S. military having to respond to multiple, simultaneous challenges is great. If current post-cold war trends continue, then the U.S. can expect a significant increase in the number of challenges it will face.

#### SIMULTANEITY OF CONFLICTS

The strategic environment will exponentially increase the likelihood of simultaneous conflicts that directly or indirectly affect U.S. national interests. The NSS outlines a diverse set of threats to our security and national goals. These threats are grouped in three, often interrelated categories. First, Regional or State-centered Threats are those that have the capabilities and desire to threaten U.S. vital interests, through either coercion or cross border aggression. 24 Many of these states are actively improving their offensive capabilities and others are threaten to destabilize regions, because of internal conflicts or failing economies. Second, Transnational Threats transcend national borders to include activities such as terrorism, illegal drug trade, illicit arms trafficking, international organized crime, uncontrolled refugee migrations, and environmental damage. 25 Third, Threats from Weapons of Mass Destruction pose the greatest potential threat to global security. The proliferation of technology places the WMD capability in the hands of actors hostile to the U.S. Outlaw states and transnational actors seek to employ or threaten the use of WMD weapons to oppose regional and global security efforts.

In addition to these categories of threats, the U.S. has chosen to become actively engaged in Peace and Humanitarian

Operations, worldwide. These conflicts are dangerously affecting the U.S. Army's ability to respond to our primary military mission of "...winning two nearly-simultaneous Major Theater Wars." These opportunities and threats compel the U.S. to become engagement in a multiple of conflicts simultaneously to either advance or protect our national interests.

The most visible national response is military power. say that a Strategic Reserve is the answer. The Strategic Reserve is defined as, "Those military forces initially uncommitted, but appropriately sized, structured, and resourced for commitment at the appropriate or decisive time to augment or increase the capabilities of immediately available/committed forces. Strategic reserve forces provide a strategic hedge with respect to both time and functional capability: capabilities resident in the pool of strategic reserve forces are the means to mitigate risk for missions the military is tasked to do, from military assistance to civil authorities and homeland defense to smaller scale contingencies and major theater war. In keeping with the concept of a national strategic reserve, these forces, inconjunction with the nation's infrastructure and industrial capacity, provide strategic flexibility for the National Command Authorities."27

The U.S. military, specifically the Army, must possess a force that can augment, reinforce or replace already engaged

forces when required. A robust, well-defined, Strategic Reserve force is the response force required for adequate current and future uncertainties.

#### THE ISSUE

Since the Cold War, however, some military planners have called for a different approach to reserve component sizing. In their view, unless a unit is not specifically listed in one of the war plans drafted in support of the current two nearly simultaneous Major Theater Wars (MTW), that unit should be disbanded or reorganized. They argue that we should maintain - even in the reserve force - only those units whose specific mission can be clearly established in support of a particular plan.

Such an approach seems to contradict the force structure proposed in the 1993 Bottom Up Review (BUR). In that report, the Department of Defense noted, "a smaller Army National Guard" would contain combat forces of two types: 15 enhanced readiness brigades (primarily to reinforce active combat units in the two MTW strategy) and "about" 22 other combat brigades "to provide strategic insurance" in the shape of "a hedge that could form the basis of an expanded American force structure and serve as a deterrent to future adversarial regimes that could threaten U.S. interests."<sup>28</sup>

The BUR was followed by the 1995 Report of the Commission on the Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces (CORM) which seemed at first glance to apply the new concept that being listed in a current war plan is the sole emblem of relevance.

Thus, any such forces not so included are excess. The CORM acknowledged the strategic hedge mission assigned by the BUR to the ARNG divisions, but characterized this as a "secondary" mission and offered the opinion that "eight divisions is too large a force" for that purpose. The CORM, however, did not suggest what the proper size of that force might be and, more importantly, it certainly did not suggest that the strategic hedge be eliminated in its entirety. Moreover, it noted that, although the CORM perspective on the future does not envision another nation's achieving military capabilities equal to those of the United States during the next 20 years, that possibility must be considered." 30

The concept of a strategic hedge is difficult to articulate. First, a consensus does not exist on how or if this hedge should be programmed. It is a force designed to deal with uncertainty. Thus, what is its size? Or exact force structure? Unlike forces programmed for specific functions in detailed scenarios involving known threats, a strategic insurance force cannot be sized as a function of a particular formula. Where uncertainty can be eliminated, the solution is not a hedge but rather a well-defined force. Hence, affordability and sustainability considerations tend to influence the answer more than other factors and the Department of Defense's "about" 22

brigades would seem as valid as the CORM's observation that this force seems "too large."  $^{31}$ 

Following the public release of the CORM report, the Secretary of the Army approved a plan developed by the Army Staff, and the leadership of the Army National Guard (including the 4 Adjutants General), to convert up to twelve combat maneuver brigades into combat support and combat service support units. This was done to meet what was agreed to be a more pressing need in support of the current strategy.

At end-state, this plan was to provide fifteen ARNG enhanced readiness brigades to assist the active Army in current deliberate war plans and fifteen additional brigades in general reserve as the strategic hedge. If the CORM thought those eight divisions (24 brigades) were too large a force for the deterrent hedge, plus other roles assigned by the BUR, reduction to 15 brigades would seem to satisfy that criticism.

At its end-state, this division redesign process will leave Army National Guard brigades as the only non-active Army combat maneuver forces, a force much smaller than that called for by the BUR in 1993 and 64% less than the number of brigades existing in the Army National Guard at the height of the Cold War. This conversion of 12 brigades will leave a total Army combat structure of 20 division equivalents, not unlike the Air Force's 20 fighter wing equivalents. By all measures this seems

to be the minimum force necessary to carry out the current strategy while remaining prepared for future requirements.

Even this planned reduction, however, has not satisfied all of those who insist that only forces specifically listed against a particular war plan should be maintained. The General Accounting Office (GAO) issued a report in March 1996 calling for the conversion of some Army National Guard combat forces to support-type units and the elimination of any remaining unit, the need for which cannot be validated through an existing war plan(s). Also, the report, while acknowledging the planned conversion of 12 brigades to support-type units, pointedly observed that the force will still contain combat structure, the need for which has not been validated. It suggested that, if need cannot be validated, this structure should eliminated. 32 An important point here is that GAO did not advocate the wholesale elimination of the strategic reserve but rather that the Department of Defense validate the need for it and determine its appropriate size.

Thus, GAO concluded that the original reason for activating those divisions had vanished:

Only one scenario envisions a conflict that would threaten U.S. interests on a global scale necessitating a force expansion capability. However, under this scenario the United States would have significant warning time - more than the Army believes is needed to reconstitute the reserve training

divisions - to monitor the emergence of the global threat and prepare for the expansion of forces. $^{33}$ 

Ironically, the National Guard divisions, while currently resourced for deployment in the early stages (90 days or less) of a major crisis, - have become repositories of capability that have provided much of the manpower to help reduce active Army operations and personnel tempo in the past few years, annually contributing thousands of man-days to perform missions in a training status in addition to the scores of units mobilized under Presidential Selected Reserve Call-up to serve in Haiti, Bosnia and other recent operations. They are also the only additional source of support to deploying forces in the event of one or more MTWs. While this type of mission is not the primary reason for retaining a strategic reserve, such opportunities help to further amortize the already minor cost of keeping them in the force structure for future exigencies.

Regardless of the position of the other services or of planners at the Department of Defense, a strong case can and should be made for retaining a strategic reserve, both for the purpose of deploying additional forces and expanding the Army. As Chief of Staff, General Dennis Reimer observed in a December 1995 interview—.

It is something that we ought not to forget about when we talk about [the Army National Guard divisions] not being relevant. It is important to remember that they give you a reconstitution capability should you

ever get involved in two major regional contingencies and have to reconstitute the force for something else.  $^{34}$ 

It is after all, the Army that runs the greatest risk of being committed to an operation that unexpectedly requires additional forces; the nature of both the Air Force and Navy makes it far less likely that they could be inextricably committed to a conflict in some future scenario with insufficient combat power to prevail or withdraw. While such a scenario seems highly unlikely in the immediate future, armies in times have too often found themselves in situations for which they have few plans made.

Another scenario unique to the Army is that in which the Army found itself during the war in Vietnam when it had to expand its force structure without a unit or leader framework to build upon. The Army was successful in acquiring half a million additional soldiers through increased draft calls but lacked the structure to integrate them into cohesive, effective units. As Lewis Sorley noted in his biography of General Creighton Abrams,

Failure to call the reserves at a time when the Army was necessarily expanding, and expanding hugely and rapidly, had a devastating effect on the force. The pool of leaders was depleted over and over again to cadre new units, with officers and noncommissioned officers being spread thinner and thinner. With the trained and experienced leaders in the National Guard and Reserve out of reach, the Army was forced to promote its young officers and sergeants prematurely,

and to replace them at lower levels with newly inducted and hastily trained substitutes. 35

The "trained and experienced leaders" in National Guard and Reserve combat units were unavailable to aid in the expansion of the Army during the Vietnam conflict because of an unfortunate decision not to mobilize a substantial number of reservists. These forces will be equally unavailable in future conflicts if their combat units have been eliminated from the force structure because they are thought to be "excess."36 To assume that we will always have adequate warning (and react to it in a timely and effective manner) or that the present contingencies for which we have planned are the only immediate threats is shortsighted. To assume that we may safely eliminate these forces now - secure in the knowledge that we can re-constitute them in plenty of time when needed - makes some highly speculative assumptions about force structure development. The scenario that appeared most likely to DOD planners - war with the Warsaw Pact in Europe; a conflict occurring in Southeast Asia involving more than half a million U.S. personnel annually (approximately the size of Operation Desert Storm) escaped their predictive abilities entirely.

Furthermore, prior experiences indicates that a consensus on preparing for war is difficult to attain until the threat is so obviously imminent that the voices arguing against it are

muted. In the case of World War 11, consensus for mobilization was reached in September of 1940, but had nearly evaporated a year later. It was maintained by the narrowest of margins less than 90 days prior to Pearl Harbor. It is useful to remember that we were then talking about whether to extend the mobilization of forces that already existed, not the *ab initio* creation of those forces. Defense planners characterized the retention of forces over and above those required for the two-MTW strategy in 1993 as *strategic insurance*. The force now planned will reduce the size of that insurance policy from 43 to 22 combat brigades.

While it remains necessary to validate the size of the strategic reserve that should be maintained in the future, to date no one seems to have openly declared that the nation does not need one of some size. Moreover, it would appear obvious that it should include both combat and support units; the latter are needed only in proportion to the former and a strategic reserve consisting only of support units would be of limited value in the scenarios for which it would be needed the most.

#### CONCLUSION

Policy makers have developed a minimum force to carry out the current national military strategy. This strategy requires a force prepared to fight and win two nearly simultaneous Major Theater Wars and, at the same time, execute a policy of preventive defense through enlargement and engagement. At the same time the nation must remain prepared for the unknown future. The Army has established through a variety of media that it needs 495,000 active soldiers in ten divisions and 575,000 reserve component soldiers in order to carry out its missions in the National Military Strategy - a strategy that requires significantly larger forces than the sum of the troop-lists for two MTWs.

That part of the Army required principally for the two MTWs consists of the active divisions, 15 Army National Guard enhanced Separate Brigades and the high priority reserve component combat support and combat service support units needed to sustain them. This part of the Army's total force is maintained at significantly higher readiness levels because it is in part threat-based and the resources allocated to their necessarily greater readiness will continue to grow or shrink with changes in the strategy and the immediacy of the threat.

The most significant portion of the reserve components represents a capabilities-based force to augment the active

force, although they do not play a significant supporting role in current war plans. As is to be expected, they can be maintained at lower readiness levels because they are not expected to play an immediate role in the two MTW strategy. However, regardless of the extent to which those plans require them, they still have a vitally relevant mission, as the nation's only strategic reserve.

Strategies and enemies will inevitably come and go as the nation's security needs evolve. Changes in strategy will necessarily impact deliberate war plans and the forces assigned against them. The ability of the nation to mobilize and of the Army to expand - should not, however, be held hostage to the precise requirements of a particular plan. It just takes too long to train soldiers and to create effective Army units.

For this reason, a minimum base force needs to be retained. The portion of it that is troop-listed against a deliberate plan at any given time will always be a function of current factors rather than timeless truth. The optimal size of the force is legitimately a subject for further analysis although the notion of a 20 division Army, some of which is troop-listed against war plans at any given time with the remainder de facto constituting the reserve, may be as good a starting point as any. In addition to that base force, however, there must be a strategic reserve. Not all forces can be threat or contingency based.

To cancel our strategic reserve, in essence a national insurance policy is to gamble that the nation will never again need to mobilize a larger Army. Whatever number of ground combat units we happen to have on the first day of the next major war will be inadequate to the task. It is a particularly important decision when we consider that the price of being wrong is one that is less likely to be paid by the generation that makes it than by some future generation of Americans.

In remarks to the Association of the United States Army,
Deputy Secretary of Defense John P. White eloquently set out the
case for remaining ready to adapt to currently unknown future
threats:

If we are to shape the future, we have to resist the natural impulse to be nearsighted - to focus our defense strategies on the world, as we know it. ...in today's world, when the threat forecast is more blurry and changeable, we must focus a greater share of our attention on the strategy and requirements for meeting the unknown challenges of the long term. In short, we need to strike a better balance between the present and the future.<sup>37</sup>

While the context suggests that he was speaking primarily about modernization, the rationale is even more applicable to ground combat forces. A massive infusion of resources can accelerate the production of weapons; time, however, is the most crucial ingredient in producing combat leaders and no sudden sense of urgency can make up for the lack of it.

No analogy is perfect, however, the characterization of the nation's strategic reserve as "insurance" seems particularly appropriate when one considers that the worst, and most expensive time to acquire insurance is after the need arises. Experience has also shown that such policies are not available after the fact. In times past, it is the Army more than the other services that has paid the greatest price for a national failure to prepare for the unexpected. Maintaining a modest, well-trained and affordable strategic combat reserve seems both reasonable and prudent.

Word Count: 5005

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- The United States Government Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, "Total Force Strategy and the Future of the National Guard", in <a href="The National Guard">The National Guard</a>: Defending the Nation and the States, p.31.
- <sup>37</sup> Association of the United States Army, "Secretary of Defense Remarks", AUSA, Washington, D.C., December, 1995.

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